

The *Rāsta* is a New Persian psychiatric medical text, belonging to the *Rivayāts* sent by Iranian Zoroastrians to the Parsis of India. Correspondence between the two communities starts at the end of the 15th century A.D. Aside from answering the questions sent by the Parsis, Iranian Zoroastrians also sent them some Avestan, Pārsīg and New Persian books, such as the *Story of priest Dēnyār*, *Jāmāspī* (and *Aḥkām i Jāmāsp*), *Mārnāma*, etc. Three of them are in the form of a priest's conversation with a foreigner:

1- *'Ulamā i Islām*. Anquetil-Duperron was the first who introduced this text. He said: "Eulma Eslam, conference théologique qui prend la religion des parses par les fondemens, remonte à des principes inconnus au peuple, peu compris par le commun des prêtres, niés ou chacés par ceuz qui sont plus instruits on ignore l'auteur de ce Traité, & le tems auquel il a été composé."¹ The Parsis are disinclined towards this text because of its 'Zurvanite' features. For it says: "It is manifest in the religion of Zoroāstra: Everything besides Time is created; and Time is the creator."²

2- *qišša i dastōr bā yek-ē az dānišmandān i mosalmān bābat i yazdān* "The account of the debate between a Parsi priest and a Muslim doctor concerning God." Closely connected with *'Ulamā i Islām*, and more probably in its imitation, this conference is between a priest and a Muslim regarding the oneness of the creator. The priest says: "Boundless Time has always existed, and Time has no boundaries ... as the soul (urvan) is mixed in the human body, God was mixed in Time, and the Evil Spirit ('iblis 'the devil') was in Time like a black, dark, evil and putrid spot."³ As we see, this text also presents 'Zurvanite' elements.

3- *Rāsta*, the text we discuss here. Rasta's author hides himself behind the name "Abū Naṣr Ma'šar b. Srōšyār i Adurxurrād i Farroxxādān", and speaks of his point of view, who was "Mōbedān Mōbed" some time. He says that before him a "Abū Ma'šar b. Jahišyār b. Mihrbān" translated the text from "Pahlavī" to Persian. The names of both the author and translators are otherwise unknown, and are possibly both fake. The story goes as: The Roman emperor, called 'bwlhnywš, sends some philosophers such as *rxynwš* and *brwtynwš* to the court of Šābuhr I, and they confer with the great Magi *d'd'r d'dd[w]xt* "Dādār i Dādduxt" in the king's presence.

At Šābuhr's rule, or decades before or after, we find no Roman emperor named Apollonius (Ar. أبولونيوس). *rxynwš* could possibly be a corrupt rendering of Ἀχιλλεύς, and *brwtynwš* that of Πλωτῖνος. Plotinus was contemporary with Šābuhr, and is said to have accompanied Gordian III on his invasion of Persia (242-43 A.D.), yet with Šābuhr's successful defense of Ērānšahr, he saw fit to forget the story of Alexander's expedition and flee to Alexandria.

Even more astonishing is the name of "Dādār i Dādduxt." We find these names nowhere else. It is surprising that a Parsi priest lays aside all attested names of Magi and invents two (unfitting) names; specially since only Ahura Mazdā is called *dādār* 'creator (of the material world).' Dādduxt also seems to be a female name. Unless these two names are bad readings of *twsł* and *d't'twr*, that is Tōsar & Dād-ādur. So the text might speak of the great priest, Tōsar, who was

¹ -- (1771), *Zend-Avesta, ouvrage de Zoroastre*, I, 1, pp. 33.

² R. Asha, [Zurvan 'Time' in the Last Texts of the Magi](#), pp. 34.

³ *ibid*, pp. 53

contemporary with Ardašēr (and Šābuhr.) If this is true, the text identifies the name of his father: Dād-ādur⁴, and affiliates the title *rāstār* (< Ir. **rāštar*- ‘(religious) leader, regulator.’ Cf. Av. *rāštarə.vayənti*:-; Skt. *rāṣṭrī*) with Tōsar. It’s plausible that this title was special to him, since it’s not found anywhere else in the Sassanian era. If this theory is correct, we can firmly believe that a Parsi priest, compiled this book based on older material. The substitution of -s with -š at the end of Greco-Roman names and the reading of *mānī* instead of *ma’nī* prove that that priest had a Gujarati accent. We have no proof of when he lived.

Rāsta can be counted as a text on psychiatry. The author of Rāsta, being a priest, has more-or-less a basic knowledge of Magian psychology. He tries to find an excuse for his ignorance of physical medicine: It is unlawful for the Magi to touch dead bodies or perform autopsy, practiced by Romans whom to this owed their progress in physical medicine.

Here the Magian view on medicine, which was alive until 10th century (by the testimony of Dēnkird), has disappeared. The Magians never practiced physical medicine, but this is not -like Manichaeans- due to despise for dead matter or abstinence from it for the sake of purity. The Egyptian and Babylonian physician could also be a priest. An Iranian physician could never be a priest. This goes back to the tri-functional ideology of Indo-Europeans. Medicine is a profession of the deities of the third function: The *Aśvins* in India, and *Θραētaona* in Iran. In physical medicine itself, sacred words and spells were used to banish illnesses; here physicians seek help from the priests, or they volunteer to do so themselves.

Tōsar ascribes the scribes, physicians, poets and astronomers to the third function⁵. The priest is the healer of character, and physician that of the body. In the Sassanian era, physicians and philosophers wrote their work with the *nēmvaštag-dibīrīh* ‘half-cursive script.’⁶ So the Magi and the Brahmins cannot be blamed for their ignorance of physical medicine. We must remember that the most advanced works on surgery in antiquity belongs to Sanskrit literature. The Dēnkird clearly separates the work of the first and third function regarding medicine:

“Part of it belongs to the priestly function, that is psychiatry (*ruvān-bizeškīh*), part of it is in the husbandmen’s function, that is bodily medicine (*tan-bizeškīh*).”⁷

Had the author of Rāsta been aware of this partition, he would not have tried to excuse his ignorance of bodily medicine by highlighting the distain of the Magi for corpses. The author was unaware that if the Persian priests didn’t have much knowledge of bodily medicine, many skilled surgeons and physicians existed between the Aryan people, whose fame we find even in farther sources. For example, the Bactrian physician whose name we find in the conference of physicians that demonstrate the Ayurveda. In the *Nīkāṭama (Pers. Nīkāḍum) book of the Avesta

⁴ This name is found on Sassanian seals. Cf. Yamauchi (1993), *The Vocabulary of Sasanian Seals*, pp. 15; Gyselen (1995), *Les sceaux des mages de l’Iran sassanide*, *Res Orientales VII*, pp. 144.

⁵ R. Asha, [The Letter of Tansar](#), pp. 10. Cf. ēvēn ī ardašēr, Grignaschi (1967), *Quelques specimens de la littérature sassanide conservés dans les bibliothèques d’Istanbul*, *JA*, pp. 54.

⁶ Flugel (1871), *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, I, pp. 13.

⁷ Dk iii. 157 (M 165): *aziš andar āsōrnīh pēšag, cōn ruvān-bizeškīh; aziš <andar> vāstryōšīh pēšag, cōn tan-bizeškīh*.

we find a law regarding giving the bodies of those sentenced to death to the physicians for autopsy and experiments⁸, something definitely unlawful for the Magi to practice.

If we overlook this problem in the Rāsta, the author must have wished to produce a text on Magian psychiatry, in an easy to understand form of conversation between “Tōsar” and “Achilleos.”

In the 19th century, Sachau speaks about Rāsta when introducing Parsi literature⁹ and Justi regarding the name Dādār¹. West cited it on astō.vīdōtu¹ (translating Ch. 2 of the Mēnōg Xrad) and Darmesteter in his English (but not French) translation of the Vīdēvdād.¹ Afterwards, into the 20th century, the Rāsta is forgotten (save for small mentions like that of R. Shahmardan.)¹

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⁸ Cf. Dk viii. M 705: *abar dāštan ī margarzān ka ped bizeškīh andar abāyed ka pēšemāl jud-dādestān baved cē, andar ham dar.*

⁹ Sachau (1869), *Contributions to the Knowledge of Parsee Literature*, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, Volume 4, Issue 1, pp. 278.

¹ Justi (1895), *Iranischem Namenbuch*, pp. 75.

¹ West (1885), *Pahlavi Texts*, III.

¹ Darmesteter (1887), *The Zend-Avesta*, I, *The Vendīdād*, pp.204; -- (1892-3) *Le Zend-Avesta*, pp.259.

¹ شهردان (۱۳۶۳)، تاریخ زرتشتیان، فرزندگان زرتشتی، ص. ۳۲۰.